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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7400
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2006

In Today's Papers

PM Erdogan on Turkish Participation in Peacekeeping Forces

All papers covered PM Erdogan's half-hour address to the nation yesterday. PM Erdogan talked about the situation in the Middle East and said "the only way to protect Turkey's national interests is to get involved in the developments in the Middle East." PM Erdogan, in his speech, defended the government's decision to send troops to Lebanon. Milliyet quotes the PM as saying that "an attitude of 'I do not care' will be treason towards our history, future and supreme interests of our nation." Yeni Safak reports that the PM noted that the government has decided to send troops to Lebanon since all of the three conditions it had set have been met: 1) Turkey demanded a UN resolution; 2) Turkey asked for a ceasefire to be declared; and 3) Turkey wanted all parties involved to welcome Turkey's contribution. PM Erdogan underlined that the UN peace force does not have the duty of disarming Hezbollah.

Commentaries on the Lebanon Peacekeeping Force and Turkey's Role

Writing in the leftist Birgun, Hrant Dink is squarely against participation: "It looks like sending Turkish soldiers to a place which is very vulnerable to provocations will be a historic mistake.

When the Turkish parliament makes its decision on Lebanon on September 5, let's hope it will be the same as the decision regarding sending troops to Iraq."

Hasan Aksay argued in the fundamentalist Vakit that there is "no need to even discuss the topic" as "you simply cannot have a discussion about the obvious": "Here the obvious thing is the fact that sending troops to Lebanon is being part of Israeli violence and being part of the Greater Middle East project. The peacekeeping force cannot be a solution to the problem because in this case the solution is coming from the aggressor."

Also weighing in against sending troops, Derya Sazak observes in the mainstream Milliyet that the Turkish government insistence that "Lebanon is different from the Iraq" and that "Hezbollah will not

harm Turkish soldiers just because of they are Muslim" is "nothing but a cheap distortion." Sazak concludes: "The Turkish parliament should reject the deployment of troops to Lebanon. Currently a bloody game is being staged in the Middle East and what we are seeing now is only the action in south Lebanon. When the next act is staged we might end up finding ourselves a part of a big war against Syria and Iran."

Writing in the Islamist-opinion maker Yeni Safak, Fehmi Koru says that Turkey should evaluate the purpose of the force: "The question we should ask is what kind of project are we about to become a part of. In the Lebanon situation, the current peacekeeping project is designed to provide Israel's security. Turkey should be a part of efforts to establish a balance of power in the Middle East where the existence of both the states of Israel and Palestine are recognized. The current peace effort is only about bringing peace through war and use of force."

Non-Commissioned Officer Investigated for Dancing with Diyarbakir Mayor

Aksam, Zaman and others: Elazig's Gezin town gendarmerie commandant Azim Basol faces an investigation for taking part in the local 'halay' folkdance accompanied by Kurdish songs along with Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir. Reportedly, a captain from the Gendarmerie Provincial Command questioned Basol yesterday, following the reports in papers about Basol taking part in a summer camp for economically disadvantaged children organized by the Diyarbakir Municipality.

DTP Siirt Members been taken to Custody

Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Yeni Safak: Papers report that the police launched an investigation into the offices of predominantly Kurdish Democratic People's Party (DTP) in the southwestern city of Siirt

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and confiscated some documents and computers. Yeni Safak reports that the police took 8 party members into custody.

Ankara Looks for a Peaceful Settlement in Iran

Milliyet reports MFA Spokesman Namik Tan in his weekly press conference yesterday expressed Ankara's firm expectation that a diplomatic resolution to the international dispute over Iran's controversial nuclear program would be found.

TV Highlights

NTV (6 a.m.)

Domestic News

Q Opposition party CHP has denounced the comments of Istanbul Police Chief Celalettin Cerrah praising the mob attacks against anti-war demonstrators in Istanbul.

Q DYP Leader Mehmet Agar urged the government to clarify the purpose of the deployment of Turkish troops in Lebanon and the details of the mission.

International News

Q Americans view Turkey as the third closest ally, after Israel and Kuwait, of the US among 13 Middle East Countries, according to the results of a new Harris Interactive Poll.

Q US Special Envoy for the PKK General Joseph Ralston plans to visit Ankara in the coming weeks.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

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